

SPRING 1994

THE ENVIRONMENT: EXPLORING THE EBONY FOREST

# ROTUNDA

*the magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum*

**WILL ASIA'S  
TEMPLES  
SURVIVE?**

**TRAGEDY AT  
INGE-VA**

**TRADITIONAL  
QUEBEC  
FURNITURE**

**DELICIOUS AND  
NUTRITIOUS  
EGGPLANT**

**CONSERVING  
AN EGYPTIAN  
CAT**

VOL. 26/NO. 4

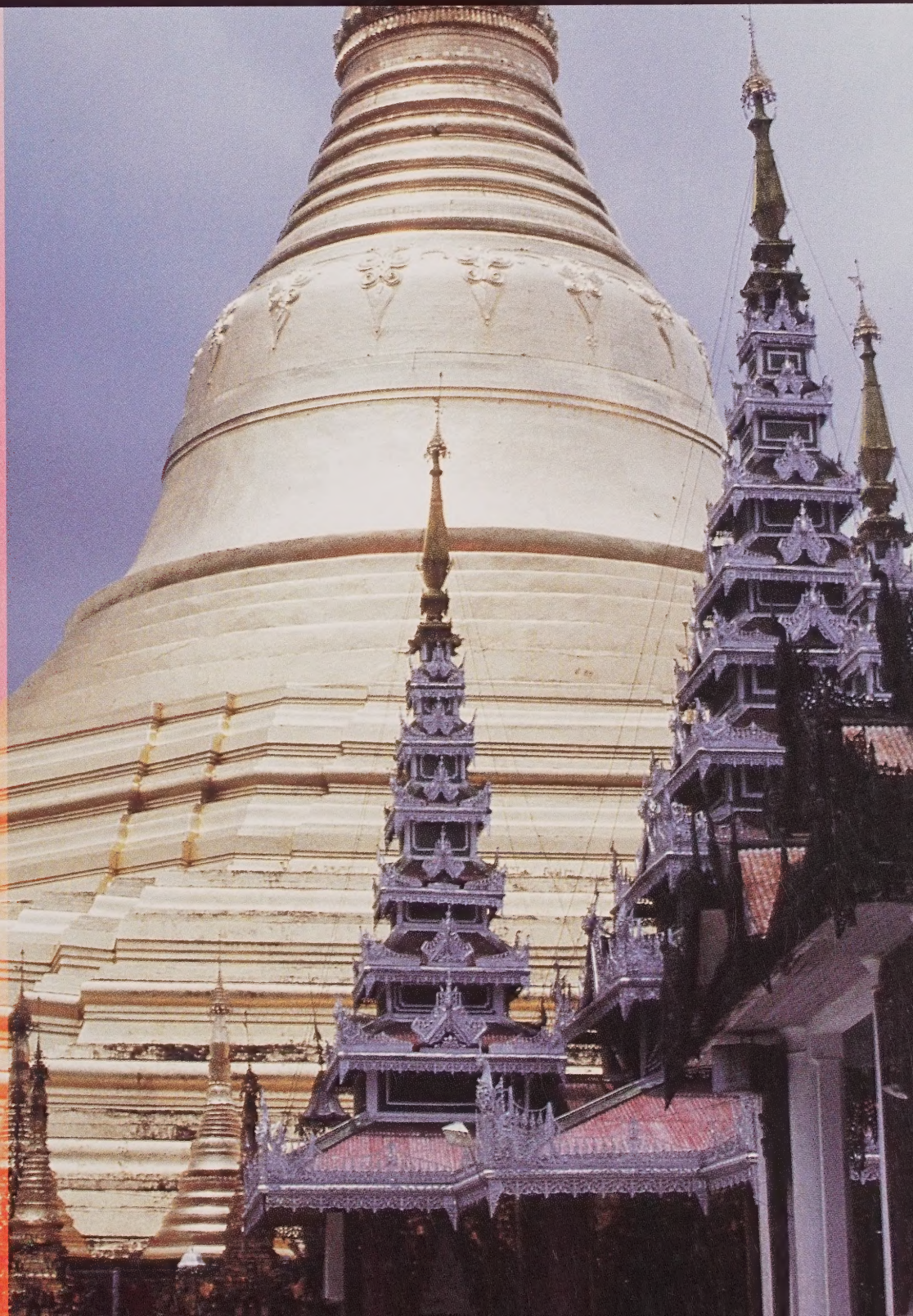
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*the magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum*

Volume 26, Number 4, Spring 1994

Date of Issue: February 1994

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The gold-leafed dome of the Shwedagon Pagoda, Myanmar's greatest Buddhist shrine, glistens above the corrugated iron roofs of the surrounding buildings.

To learn more about Asia's temples turn to page 26.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN FONTEIN

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## ✠ EDITOR'S NOTE ✠

FEW WOULD ARGUE THAT preserving cultural heritage is an important and necessary task. It is, nevertheless, a task that can be charged with controversy, especially when the preservation touches such a sensitive area as religion. Jan Fontein has studied many of Asia's religious monuments and as he explains in the cover story, certain dilemmas pertaining to their maintenance arise again and again. The first, at least from the point of view of architectural historians and archaeologists, is restoration work carried out under the supervision of a religious community that does not take into account historical materials and techniques. Then there is the appropriation of and perceived defacement of one group's monument by another, a situation that can arise when the majority of a population has converted to another religion. And when associated religions are revived, there may be attempts to reclaim monuments that have not been used for religious purposes, sometimes for centuries. As complex as these circumstances may be, Fontein passionately supports the implementation of proper conservation methods and legal safeguards to preserve these monuments of the past for future generations.

Asia is not only home to great cultural diversity, the extent of the biological diversity in its rainforests is quite staggering. As journalist Ann Walmsley explains, the work of museums is increasingly relevant to governments wishing to research and guard these priceless resources. In the third of a series of articles highlighting ROM research on the environment, Walmsley writes about entomologist Chris Darling's ongoing collaboration with the national museum in Indonesia and the work that has him in-



vestigating the soaring forest canopies of Borneo.

Also on the subject of investigating mysteries, Camille Sobrian Finlay recounts the tragic story of the Radenhursts, a 19th-century family that lived in Perth, Ontario.

The story revolves around Ingeva, their home, now owned by the Ontario Heritage Foundation. Archaeologists were puzzled when they discovered the house's privy full of such household contents as kitchen utensils, beautiful dishes and stemware, and toiletry items. Matching their findings with historical documents, journals from townspeople, and oral histories, the researchers were able to reconstruct in great detail the everyday life of the family.

The new Sigmund Samuel Canadiana Gallery on the Canadian Heritage Floor of the Royal Ontario Museum has just opened. Among the many things that you can see there are pieces of Quebec furniture, which belong to the finest collection in Canada. Don Webster, curator in charge of the Museum's Canadiana Department, writes about the continuing traditions in French-Canadian furniture. Webster traces the influences of Church patronage, English and American styles, and the growth of commercial manufacture on furniture design, and offers explanations for the present dearth of genuine antiques. How traditions in furniture manufacture survived is, in some ways, a reflection of the survival of French-Canadian culture.

From the glory of the ancient temples of Asia to the private affairs of a 19th-century Ontario family, we hope you are intrigued by this issue of *Rotunda*.

*Sandra Shaul*

SANDRA SHAUL

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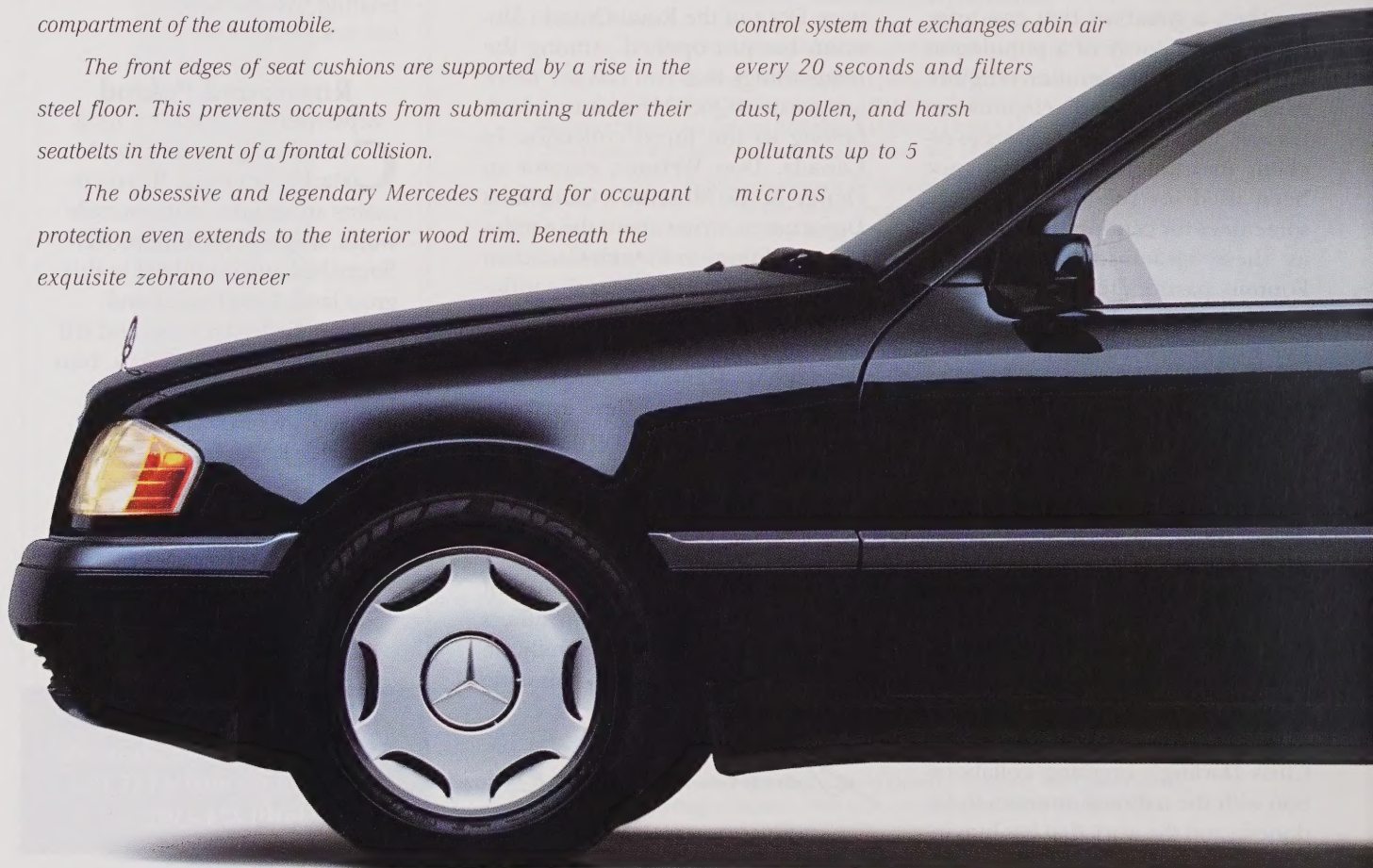
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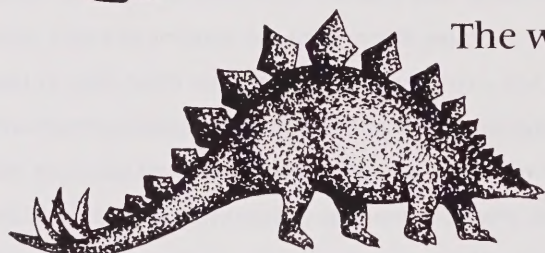


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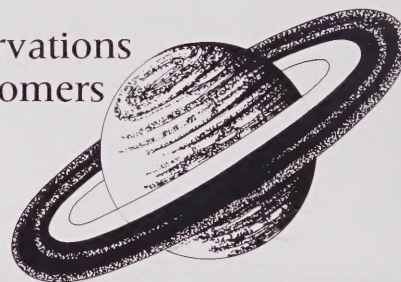


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*Eggplant is a very versatile, delicious, and nutritious vegetable*

## Eggplant

EGGPLANT IS THE GENE HACKMAN of vegetables; it is cuisine's great chameleon, never a superstar but always ready to perform, and extremely versatile. If they gave out Oscars to food, eggplant would walk away with Best Supporting Actor every other year.

This may come as news to Canadians, who haven't quite figured out what to do with it. But not to Indians. Eggplant, born *solanum melongena*, a member of the nightshade family of plants that includes tobacco and the potato, is a native of the Subcontinent. Indian vegetarian chefs have been honing their art for 5000 years. Eggplant is a venerable staple in Mother India's kitchen.

Indians have lost count of preparations, but a single cookbook, Yamuna Devi's *The Best of Lord Krishna's Cuisine* (Penguin, \$16.99) rhymes off

10 recipes from pan-fried baby eggplants with ground almonds to crispy diced eggplant with bitter neem leaves, a dish devised to honour a Hindu saint in the 15th century.

The dish familiar to most Westerners is *bharta*, eggplant puree seasoned with the full arsenal of Indian spices. A good *bharta* tickles the palate and stirs the blood. It is easy to find in Bombay, Delhi, or London, where Indian reigns supreme among the Empire's cuisines, but not in Toronto or Montreal.

Eggplant travelled the Silk Roads gathering a public along the way. In Szechuan, the Chinese defence against perpetual mist and drizzle is eggplant howling with garlic and chilies. Afghans infuse it with garlic and sauce it with yoghurt. The Lebanese puree it, pan-fry it, pickle it, and meld it with pepper, garlic,

and lemon for the celebrated *babghanouj*, also known as "poor man's caviar."

But the great directors of eggplant in history were, unquestionably, the Ottoman Turks. The kitchen of Suleiman the Magnificent boasted a royal repertoire of 130 eggplant dishes. By comparison, modern Turkey offers a relatively modest complement of purees zapped with lime juice and crisp fritters fried in olive oil. I warm to the sentiments of *imam bayildi*, a stuffed eggplant dish which translates as "the imam fainted"—referring to a religious leader who fainted with pleasure at first sniff.

Eggplant rode west with the Arabs in the 9th century, fanning out through the Mediterranean world. The Greeks embellish it with cheese, onions, ground lamb, and



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## FOOD AND CULTURE CONTINUED

bechamel sauce for *moussaka*. The Moroccans make eggplant frittes. The Spanish thrash it into a fashionable *mousse* sauced with tomato and basil.

The Italians are very good at it. They make roast eggplant soup with goat cheese and sun-dried tomatoes. They grill it over charcoal and drizzle it with virgin olive oil. On festive occasions there is *caponata*, the celebratory salad of eggplant, tomatoes, and onions laced with pine nuts, olives, capers, and sometimes bitter chocolate and sultanas.

The French have called it *aubergine* since it arrived in the 17th century. They point to *ratatouille* as their great accomplishment, but I'll take eggplant stuffed with anchovies and herbs anytime, served slightly chilled to give the flavours a smoky, spicy edge.

However, the English did not take to eggplant and went so far as to suggest it caused epilepsy. In 1597, the British were advised to "content themselves with the meate and sauce of our owne country than with fruit and sauce eaten with such peril; for doubtless these apples have a mischievous quality; the use thereof is utterly forsaken."

This nonsense did not prevent Thomas Jefferson from introducing eggplant to the United States, and cultivating it in his Monticello garden, but Americans didn't—and still don't—pay much attention. Except, of course, for Californians, who have rediscovered it with the usual sounding of flugelhorns.

Although eggplant needs no legitimization from New Puritans, it does seem a perfect dish for 1990s correctitude. It has few calories and loads of fibre, calcium, and potassium. Anyone can afford it. You can dress it up and take it to a barbecue, a ball, or anywhere at all.

The marvellous vegetable comes in white, tan, lavender, and green, but two varieties predominate on supermarket shelves: the large purple-black globe eggplant associated with Europe is more common, but the smaller, trimmer, vibrantly purple

Oriental eggplant found in Asian supermarkets is far better. Its flesh is sweet-tasting. It has no unpleasant bitterness. The skin is so tender there's no need to peel it. In cooking, it absorbs far less oil.

Eggplant's mild flavour makes it a willing companion for any sort of culinary intrigue. It is ready to sign up with any catalyst that comes along. Roasting automatically brings out a smoky quality wonderful in purees. Frying brings out a certain sweetness.

For a peek into eggplant's future, look to chef and cookbook-author Georges Blanc. He provides some long overdue glamour with such ingenious recipes as eggplant caviar wrapped in smoked salmon and eggplant quenelles with zucchini petals. Either one is fine enough to call for champagne.

I've become an eggplant evangelist. I tell anybody who will listen about eggplant's limitless reach, and am usually ignored. Recently I told my wife that I would like to experiment with eggplant and garlic ice cream. She said: "Go ahead. Tell me when you want to do it. By the way, I am out that night." The following is a more traditional Italian recipe.

#### CAPONATA

*This festive eggplant stew can be served cold as a salad as it is here, or warm as a vegetable side dish.*

#### Ingredients

- 450 g (1 lb) Oriental eggplant, peeled and cut in 2.5 cm (1-inch) cubes
- salt
- 1 large clove of garlic, finely sliced
- 1 medium red onion, diced
- 45 ml (3 tbsp) olive oil
- 185 ml (3/4 cup) sun-dried olives, halved, seeded
- 1 red pepper, seeded, cut into cubes
- 796 ml (28-oz) tin plum tomatoes, drained, quartered
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) capers
- 60 ml (1/4 cup) red wine vinegar
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) pine nuts, toasted
- fresh ground black pepper to taste

#### Method

Lightly sprinkle the eggplant with salt and set in a colander to drain for 30 minutes. Pat the eggplant dry with paper towels. In a large, deep-sided fry pan, sauté the garlic and onion in 15 ml (1 tbsp) of olive oil over medium heat until they are transparent. Remove from the pan. Add the remaining 30 ml (2 tbsp) of olive oil to the pan. Add the eggplant. Fry over medium-high heat, stirring frequently until the eggplant is golden brown (about 10 minutes).

Return the onion-garlic mixture to the pan. Add the olives, red pepper, tomatoes, capers, and vinegar. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes. Remove the caponata to a serving bowl and refrigerate until 1/2 hour before serving. Just before serving, top with toasted pine nuts and fresh ground pepper. Serves four.

JEREMY FERGUSON

*Jeremy Ferguson is a travel and food writer based in Toronto*

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## ❖ GROWING COLLECTIONS ❖



*Eleven of the approximately 5000 specimens of invertebrates from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Collection now housed at the ROM. They are (clockwise from upper left) a snail, water scorpion, leech, crayfish, giant water bug, stonefly, dragonfly nymph, mussel, (centre clockwise from top) diving beetle, crane fly larva, Dobson fly larva.*

### **Museum is New Home for Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Collection of Freshwater Invertebrates**

Collaboration between the Royal Ontario Museum and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) resulted in the transfer of an extensive and comprehensive collection of freshwater invertebrates to the Departments of Invertebrate Zoology and Entomology on 18 May 1993. Close to 5000 different types of aquatic invertebrates are represented by more than 300,000 specimens. Commonly recognized types of animals include worms, molluscs, crayfishes, leeches, and insect larvae (caddisflies, black flies, etc.), as well as a veritable array of beetles and bugs. The dominant group is insects, which comprise about 75 per cent of the specimens collected.

Invertebrate sampling was initiated by the MNR in the early 1970s

and extended over a period of some 20 years as the Aquatic Habitat Inventory Program. Basic biological, chemical, and physical conditions were selectively surveyed throughout Ontario's quarter-million lakes, streams, and large rivers. As part of the biological survey, invertebrates were collected in a standardized manner from a variety of micro-habitats in streams and rivers. The MNR collection may be the most comprehensive record of its kind in Canada.

As primary links in the food chain of freshwater ecosystems, aquatic invertebrates are important sources of food for many organisms, including larger invertebrates, frogs, salamanders, fish, waterfowl, and small mammals. The abundance and diversity of invertebrates (more than 95 per cent of all described animals) and their susceptibility and responsiveness make them valuable indicators of ever-changing environ-

mental conditions. It is of critical importance, therefore, to have properly preserved specimens and well-documented information on their provenance to provide a basis of reference for scientific studies. With increasing pressures on Ontario's waterways from industry, forestry, agriculture, and urban development, it is clear that the MNR collection represents an important baseline of environmental conditions during the 1970s and 1980s.

As Dr. David Brose, the ROM's associate director, curatorial, recently noted in the Fall 1993 issue of the MNR newsletter *Information Quarterly*: "The cooperation between the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Royal Ontario Museum will benefit anyone trying to understand environmental stability and change in Ontario, in Canada or throughout the world, today, and in the future."

Curating and integrating such an

enormous volume of specimens into the collections of the two ROM departments requires substantial funding, staff, and space. The acquisition would not have been possible without financial assistance from various sources. An initial boost to the project was a grant by the ROM Museum Volunteers' Reproductions Association Acquisition Fund towards the purchase of supplies for the curation process. This was followed shortly thereafter by a complementary contribution from the ROM Endowment.

Staff assistance was obtained through a grant from the Ontario Government Environmental Youth Corps '93 Program, providing for one long-term and two short-term positions. The project team quickly began to grow with the addition of a short-term position received from the jobsOntario Youth Program. More recently a grant from Employment and Immigration Canada provided another short-term position through the Unemployment Insurance Job Creation Program Section 25. In all, more than \$56,000 has been contributed in 1993 in support of this project. The generous support of these agencies is greatly appreciated. The project managers anticipate that it will be at least five years before the major portion of the collection is integrated into the departmental collections.

Perhaps it is difficult for those not closely associated with the world of invertebrates to appreciate the significance of such an acquisition. But world-renowned biologist, E. O. Wilson put the matter in perspective, particularly for those concerned with the conservation of biological diversity, when he reminded us that we should not forget "the little things that run the world."

SHEILA BYERS

AND GEORGE GALE

*Sheila Byers is a curatorial assistant in the ROM Department of Invertebrate Zoology; George Gale is senior inventories development planner, Natural Resources Information Branch, Ministry of Natural Resources.*



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# THE SURVIVAL OF TRADITION IN QUEBEC FURNITURE

*The story of  
French-Canadian culture  
is reflected in  
its historic furniture*

DONALD B. WEBSTER



The Boston rocker (c. 1840-1860), an American furniture design that was popular in Quebec, is a prime example of outside influence on French traditional design. Although only the downward-sloping arms are of purely French design, the rocker-top extensions and heavy spiral carving of the arms and seat front are typical of Quebec versions of this chair. The chair was acquired through the ROM Purchase Trust.

LIFE REMAINED VIRTUALLY UN-  
changed for the French-Canadian population of Quebec immediately following the British conquest of New France in 1760. Their society, based economically on agriculture, fishing, fur trapping, and craftsmanship, and centred culturally on the Roman Catholic Church, carried on just as it had done during the previous 150 years.

The Treaty of Paris and Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Quebec Act of 1774 had guaranteed the Québécois the continu-

ity and security of the French language, French law, and the Church. However, the benevolent British ascendancy did not guarantee political or financial power. After 1760, a steady stream of English-speaking Protestants—Americans from New England, English, and Scots—flowed into Quebec. In contrast

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*Donald B. Webster is a curator in the Canadiana Department,  
Royal Ontario Museum*

to the French population, they proceeded to build an urban, mercantile society.

Opportunistic and entrepreneurial, within 20 years the Anglo-American population had firmly established itself, primarily in the city of Montreal, dominating business and commerce. Though Quebec was the capital and Montreal had been a secondary city during the French regime, Montreal was now the more important city because of its location. Situated at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, it was the most westerly point in Canada directly accessible to ocean vessels, and the entry point to the West. Montreal controlled the sole water routes to the Great Lakes, to what became Upper Canada, and to fur-trading regions that developed eventually all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

Quebec's population was, by the late 18th century, diverging into two distinct groups. The English-speaking, Protestant, mercantile and commercial population was concentrated and dominant in the cities of Quebec and Montreal, while the French-speaking, Roman Catholic population was widely dispersed on the land, in the cities, and in villages. Today the cultural differences of that era can be clearly seen in the decorative arts, particularly in the furniture created in late 18th- and 19th-century Quebec.

After about 1780 in the increasingly wealthy English-speaking urban areas, the home furnishings of choice were in the Anglo-American styles—Chippendale, Hepplewhite, Sheraton, Classical Revival, Regency, and Empire—fashionable throughout the English-speaking world. Imported West Indian mahogany rather than native woods was the preferred material, although local white pine was always used for the interiors of furniture. Mahogany was easily imported as ship ballast into any port from the Maritimes to Montreal, as were the English brass hardware and veneers (in pre-cut bundles) that were also needed for English-style furniture.

All of this was quite foreign to Quebecois taste. French-Canadian furniture was more traditional in style, and therefore less subject to trends. Native woods, including maple, birch, ash, butternut, and pine, predominated. Design and construction employed the ancient technique of joining tenoned cross-members into mortised uprights held by wooden pins, the

A child's commode chair (c. 1780-1810) is a good example of "franglais," the mixture of French and English stylistic details. The seat frame with its bowed front and the arms are Louis XV style, and the overall construction is very much in the French tradition. However, the tall narrow back and ogee front legs are in the English Queen Anne style. Both styles were obsolete as current fashion in France and England respectively when the chair was made. The chair was a gift from the Laidlaw Foundation.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN BOYLE

This *rustique* rocking chair (c. 1840-1870), with its unusual underbracing, was obviously built for someone extremely heavy. Traditionally Québécois in construction, the chair's design includes an English-Chippendale-derived slip seat, Empire-Restoration recurved rocker mountings, a Louis XIII finial on the lower cross-brace, and traditional Quebec arms. The chair's details cover two centuries stylistically. It was a gift from Jeanne Costello.



same technique used for larger-scale construction of houses and barns. Glues were simply not used for the fabrication of French-Canadian furniture as they were for Anglo-American furniture. Rather than imported brass, French-Canadian furniture makers chose hardware made of iron and formed by local blacksmiths. While elaboration focused on carving and planed mouldings, veneers and inlays were not part of the French-Canadian tradition.

The American Revolution, followed by the Napoleonic Wars, provided a massive economic boost to British North America. With the wars came an insatiable British appetite for commodities, from lumber to flour—as much as could be produced. British North America was also hugely subsidized, both through public works and through infusions of British money to pay for and to support colonial governments and sizeable military garrisons posted in every large town. By 1780, the English-speaking population controlled all aspects of the export trade.

Conservative and traditional, the Québécois gradually became habituated to the English hegemony. The French-speaking population did not so much retreat as entrench itself behind traditional lifestyles, taking refuge in its language, and seeking security in French law and the Church. Not only did the medieval forms of land tenure continue; the Church continued to control education, and local priests, with Church taxation (tithing) powers, remained the leaders of villages.

Québécois artisans, including cabinetmakers, tended to follow two directions. Those working in the English-dominated cities quickly saw their potential market. Many began making furniture according to English fashions, using mahogany with imported veneers, inlays, and hardware. Although very few of their pieces were maker-marked, it can be assumed that some Québécois cabinetmakers, like silversmiths, produced furniture in both French and English styles, depending on the demands of their clients.

On the other hand, in the towns and villages, away from the

*Québécois cabinetmakers working in the English-dominated cities began making furniture according to English fashions*

English-speaking market and largely insulated from its influence, French traditional artisanship continued. Cabinetmaking and other crafts were governed by a French-derived apprenticeship system. Masters employed methods and built pieces in styles they had been taught as apprentices. In turn they faithfully passed this knowledge on to their own apprentices. Within this system there was little room for innovation of style or construction.

Whereas French traditional design had no impact on English fashion, English design characteristics, as might be expected, crept into traditionally French forms. This resulted in very common late-18th- and 19th-century stylistic mixtures that are facetiously called "franglais."

Québécois conservatism and the apprenticeship system preserved tradition to the extent that post-medieval, 17th-century Louis XIII details were still being used in furniture construction in the mid-19th century, two centuries after they had become fashionably obsolete in France. So too, Louis XV forms, elaborate, difficult, and time-consuming to construct, continued to be made in Quebec nearly up to 1900. As late as the 1820s and 1830s, church-interior carving, a specialized craft, was still being created in the French baroque and rococo styles of a century earlier.

Such traditions are sometimes called design throwbacks, but they are really design survivals. Design survivals within North America were not unique to Quebec. They occurred wherever relative isolation from mainstream fashion coincided with a strong cultural or linguistic tradition in a particular geographic area. In Quebec, however, design continuity was stronger and longer-lived than in most regions, and even more interesting when archaic French-derived styles took on aspects of later-English design.

Because of the consistency of design over the decades, early French-Canadian furniture is often difficult to date with precision. The task becomes more complex when French and English designs are combined. Objects can best be dated by their latest

Like other pieces of 17th-century Quebec furniture, this stretcher table (c. 1690-1697) is Louis XIII style. It was either saved from the fire in 1695 at the Hôtel-Dieu in Montreal, or made as a replacement in 1697.



*Québécois  
cabinetmakers  
insulated  
from the  
English market  
continued in  
the tradition of  
the French  
apprenticeship  
system*

In the foreground of the dramatic oil painting *L'Incendie du Quartier Saint-Jean vu vers l'ouest*, c. 1845, by Joseph Légaré, some pieces of furniture that survived the fire have been placed in the remains of a building's foundation. The painting, which is in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, was purchased with assistance from Wintario, 1976.



characteristics, a standard archaeological technique.

Away from the English urban market, the Church continued to be the prime patron for traditional French building, interiors, and furnishings, just as it was for silver wares. The Church, with its taxation authority, built huge ecclesiastical edifices, while the surrounding parishioners lived in four-room stone houses, which were heated by fireplaces. Priests contracted teams of specialist cabinetmaker-carvers—the Louis Quevillon group, active from the 1790s to the 1820s was perhaps the best known—to provide

grand interiors and furnishings for their churches. They commissioned urban silversmiths for the finest serving vessels, and employed wood sculptors to produce crucifixes, altars, and carved figures.

Much of the Church-commissioned furnishing and sculpture survives. Church patronage provided employment for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of skilled artisans, from builders to silversmiths. As a result 18th- and 19th-century Quebec produced one of the greatest bodies of ecclesiastical decorative arts in North America.

Both the elaboration and quality of French-tradition domestic furniture declined, however, in the early 19th century. The French tradition in cabinetmaking remained, but the grandeur disappeared as did the independent cabinetmakers. By the 1830s decorative carving and moulding was well on the way out, and by about 1850 virtually all French-tradition Quebec domestic furniture could be described as “country” or *rustique*.

The cause of this decline was not English cultural dominance,

or any ultimate homogenization of the French and English cultures, but rather new forces—technology and industrialization. Age-old commercial crafts that were based on skilled handiwork, whether cabinet-making, glass-blowing, pottery-making, or blacksmithing, were declining and vanishing everywhere.

Individual artisans could not compete with or survive in the face of mechanized, factory-produced inexpensive mass pro-

*Quebec produced one of the greatest bodies of ecclesiastical decorative arts in North America during the 18th and 19th centuries*



The console table (c. 1818-1821), executed in both the Louis XV and French Baroque styles, is one of a pair created for the church at Longueuil by the great church carver Louis Aimable Quevillon (1749-1823). It was a gift of the Laidlaw Foundation.

PHOTOGRAPH OF PAINTING BY JAMES CHAMBERS

duction, with regional and ultimately continental distribution of goods made possible by steamships and railroads. Even the tradition-bound culture of Quebec could not wholly withstand the industrial revolution. By the late 19th century the Québécois were migrating by their thousands to the mills and factories of the New England states.

No one knows what percentage of the furniture originally produced in Quebec at different periods still survives, but the great majority has certainly disappeared. Fires, which destroyed not only individual houses but large sections of cities, took a major toll, as did deliberate discards. Possibly less than one per cent of pieces produced in the 17th century still exists. Eighteenth-century furniture in Louis XIII, rococo, and Louis XV styles is also rare. Perhaps only two to three per cent of the original quantities remain. Although there is a fairly large body of French-tradition furniture made in the 19th century, it may represent no more than 10 to 15 per cent of all that was originally made.

Though the ancient commercial craft system may have died out, replaced by modern manufacturing technology, the French design tradition and a tradition of individual artisanship remain strong in Quebec. A crafts revival, which began in the 1930s, pro-

duces new houses of *ancien régime* architecture, as well as very faithful reproduction furniture, carving, sculpture, and sheet and forged metalwork. The lively interest in the craft tradition and antiques has led, inevitably, to excellent fakery, which is, for the most part, decorative upgrading of early French-Canadian furniture.

The preservation of the few genuine antiques that exist, the crafts revival, and even the making of forgeries have ensured that a nearly three-centuries-old tradition not only survives, but prospers. One of the finest collections of French-Canadian domestic furniture in the country belongs to the Royal Ontario Museum. The best pieces are on display in the Museum's recently opened Sigmund Samuel Canadiana Gallery. ♣

*French traditions of design and individual artisanship survived the demise of the ancient commercial craft system*

The *bonnetière galbe* (c.1750-1770) was created in Louis XV style. This style was popular in New France before 1750 and remained so into the 19th century, long after it had become unfashionable in France. The *bonnetière galbe* was a gift of Jeanne Costello.



Below: (Top) Longboats in Long Bia are loaded and ready to ascend the Kayan and Bahau rivers. (Bottom) The World Wildlife Fund research station near Long Alango in the Kayan Mentarang region of Indonesian Borneo. Right: A giant dipterocarp tree (*Shorea*) is home to countless species of wildlife.





# FROM THE IVORY TOWER

*ROM scientists  
are helping  
the Indonesian  
government study  
its rainforest*

# TO THE EBONY FOREST

ANN WALMSLEY

**A**MID THE DENSE LOWLAND RAINFOREST OF coastal Indonesian Borneo, Chris Darling, a curator of entomology at the Royal Ontario Museum, climbs 30 metres into the canopy on scaffolding that makes his onlookers blanch. The structure is braced against a *Shorea* tree—giant trees much in demand in Indonesia's logging industry but also home to countless species of wildlife. With a few adroit yanks, Darling and colleagues from Indonesia's national zoological museum, hoist a Malaise insect trap into place just beneath the canopy foliage. Every week hundreds of beetles, flies, thrips, and wasps, some of them microscopically small, will fly up the netting and into a bottle of preserving fluid. "What we find when we empty the traps is incredible," says Darling. "The vast majority of the smaller insects are simply unknown to science."

The Indonesian rainforest is known mainly for its larger, more flamboyant inhabitants: orangutans, rhinoceros hornbills, rare two-horned Asian rhinos, and flying foxes. It is also home to the magnificent *Rafflesia*, a garish red-and-white flower that can grow to a metre across and has evolved to look and smell like carrion. This attracts the bluebottle flies that pollinate it. But the Indonesian government's problem is the lack of knowledge about the full range of the forest's dazzling biological diversity, including the termites, in-

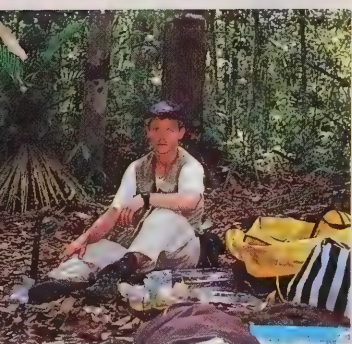
sects, and other species most vital to the ecosystem. Without that knowledge, government officials claim they are ill-equipped to make decisions about conservation planning, logging practices, fisheries enterprises, and ecotourism. And some of the best information is now in danger of disappearing completely. Inadequate storage conditions in the museum and herbarium are threatening thousands of animal and plant specimens, some of them more than 100 years old.

The ROM has been working with the Indonesian Institute of Science to improve its capacity to inventory and monitor the country's wealth of flora and fauna. Darling, together with four other consultants from the United States and Europe, has assisted government officials in applying for Global Environment Facility (GEF) funds to improve the Museum Zoologicum Bogoriense and Herbarium Bogoriense, the national museum and herbarium of Indonesia. The advisory team, coordinated by John Burley, a botanist at Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum, has assisted the Indonesian government in drawing up a proposal with three main objectives: to recruit and train Indonesian collectors, collection managers, and researchers for expertise in biodiversity monitoring; to restore and develop the specimen collections at the national herbarium and zoological

MAIN IMAGE: PHOTOGRAPH BY LISA CURRAN/SECONDARY IMAGES. PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS DARLING

*Ann Walmsley is a Toronto journalist*

**Below: (Top) A Malaise insect trap and scaffolding are positioned in a Shorea tree. (Bottom) ROM curator Chris Darling has an ongoing collaboration with the zoological museum in Indonesia to study insects in Borneo and Sumatra. Right: The endangered *Rafflesia* plant has flowers measuring nearly a metre across.**

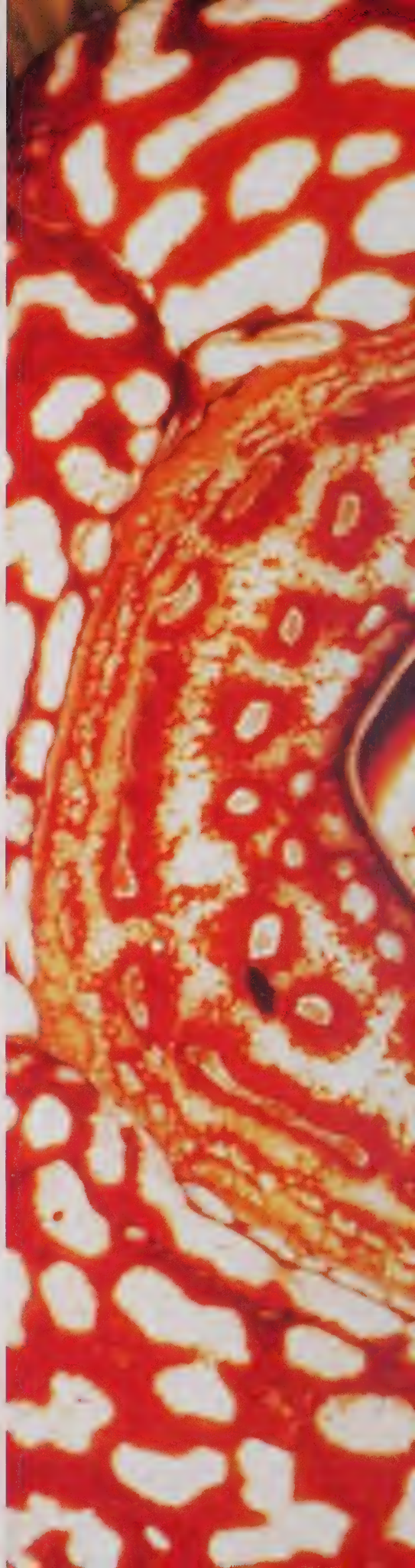


museum; and to mobilize international scientific cooperation and support. World Bank officials who administer the GEF say that the project is likely to receive US \$7 million. "People used to think of museums as ivory towers where researchers carried out esoteric work," says Darling. "But the biodiversity crisis has changed all that. Museums are now being asked to provide important information for conservation programs."

Darling's involvement in the GEF proposal grew out of his ongoing collaboration with the zoological museum to study insects in Borneo and Sumatra. His track record in Indonesia is different from the so-called scientific imperialism that characterized many western research activities in the past. For years, scientists collected samples in Indonesia and exported them to European or North American laboratories where research and analysis was conducted. Darling instead has hired and trained Indonesian scientists and technicians to collect, rough sort, mount, and label insects collected in the field. And last fall, the zoological museum's insect curator, Rosichon Ubaidillah, spent two months in Toronto learning collection management techniques and conducting taxonomic research with Darling on parasitic wasps. "Many programs have used Indonesian museum staff as porters and collectors," says Darling. "What we are trying to do is develop local expertise."

It's not surprising that an insect specialist would be considered an ideal adviser on biodiversity matters. Insects are vital to preserving rainforests. As American entomologist Edward O. Wilson writes in his book *The Diversity of Life*: "Insects can thrive without us, but we and most other land organisms would perish without them." "Orangutans are a perfect example of this interdependence," says Darling. Figs are a dietary staple for orangutans. It is minute wasps that pollinate the figs. Bats then disperse the fruit and seeds throughout the forest in their droppings.

However, very little is known about insects. Fewer than one million of the estimated 10 to 30 million insect species on Earth have been described. Rainforests in particular have kept their insect secrets the longest in part because of the difficulty of collecting in the upper canopy. When Terry Erwin of the U.S. National Museum of Natural History fogged a small section of the Peruvian rainforest canopy in 1982, he





discovered that nearly every species that fell to the ground was unknown to science.

North Americans tend to be less familiar with the Indonesian rainforest than with the Amazon, whose troubles have been highlighted by eco-guru Thomas Lovejoy of the Smithsonian Institution. But Indonesia's tropical forests cover 110 million hectares—the largest such expanse in the world after Brazil. Although the chain of islands represents only 1.3 per cent of Earth's land area, it contains an extremely high percentage of the world's animal and plant species, an estimated 25 per cent of the fishes, 17 per cent of the birds, reptiles, and amphibians, 12 per cent of all mammals, and 10 per cent of the plants. Its splendour is particularly remarkable for certain groups. Indonesia has more species of mammals than any country in the world (515) and more species of swallowtail butterflies (121, of which 36 are found only in Indonesia).

Part of the reason for Indonesia's incredible diversity is that the archipelago spans both the Asian and Australian continental plates. The western islands including Java and Sumatra have animals and plants closely related to those on the Asian mainland. The eastern islands have organisms more akin to those in Australia. The "Galapagos" factor is also at work—the isolation of individual islands has encouraged the evolution of unique animals and plants. The very height of the rainforest trees offers zones of different habitats between the forest floor and the upper canopy. Much of the primary rainforest reaches 45 metres or more, while some emergent dipterocarp trees such as *Shorea* grow to 75 metres.

Among tree species, diversity is remarkable. According to Burley, 400 different types of dipterocarp trees may exist in Indonesia, of which nearly three quarters are in Indonesian Borneo (Kalimantan). "According to 1990 World Bank figures, their economic importance to Indonesia is second only to oil and gas in terms of foreign export earnings," says Burley. "Yet of these 400 types of dipterocarps, only about four to six kinds are commonly recognized by foresters." This means that rare and valuable resources could be overharvested.

The GEF project will provide access to information to clarify some of the "guesstimates" about the destruction of natural habitats and species. According to another proposed GEF project for conservation of biodiversity in Indonesia, current defor-

estation rates range from as high as 1,315,000 hectares per annum to 262,900 per annum. The higher figure would mean that more than one per cent of the closed canopy forest is lost each year. "A standard trick is to log it [the forest] and then declare it a nature reserve," says Kathy MacKinnon, a British biologist and ecologist who wrote the National Biodiversity Action Plan for the Indonesian government in 1991. "There is an amazing lack of information," says one scientist. "We have satellites that can read the licence plates of cars, but we don't know how fast the rainforest is being converted."

However, Edward Wilson has estimated that about 27,000 species of plants and animals living in rainforests may become extinct each year. In Indonesia, two birds that are believed to have vanished recently are the Java Wattle Lapwing and the Caerulean Paradise Flycatcher.

One obstacle to rainforest management is that the Indonesian economy is dependent to a large degree on harvesting its plant and animal wealth. There must be trade-offs when local people are considered; an estimated 40 million Indonesians are directly dependent upon biodiversity for subsistence. Another proposed GEF project will attempt to develop an integrated conservation and development program in Sumatra, where a one-million-hectare park of lowland rainforest in the Kerinci-Seblat area is under constant pressures such as the harvesting of cinnamon by settlers.

Although Darling anticipates the start of the GEF project in 1994, he is still actively expanding the cooperative program between the ROM and the zoological museum with the goal of building both the Toronto and Indonesian research collections. On his trip to Borneo last spring, Darling brought along two ROM mammal-



Also on the threatened list are the existing natural history collections in both the herbarium and the zoological museum located just outside of Jakarta. Most of the herbarium's collections of leaves, flowers, and other plant material are contained in rusting metal boxes, many of which lack fitting lids. There is no climate control so the collections are exposed to extremes of humidity and temperature. Beetle larvae destroy many newly collected plant specimens because the insects can fly in through the open, unscreened windows. Acidic paper mounts are slowly disintegrating. "At the herbarium alone, 20 per cent of the specimens are in imminent danger of irreversible damage," says John Burley. "This is an international scientific asset falling apart before our eyes." Mould and insect damages are also a persistent problem for the collections of birds, mammals, and insects.

ogists, Mark Engstrom and Burton Lim to collect and inventory small mammals, including bats and rodents. Half of the 140 mammal species on Borneo are bats. And in March, ROM invertebrate zoologists will travel with Darling to the interior of Borneo to begin a survey of invertebrate animals that live in the soil.

Although the ROM scientists are not quick to complain, the conditions faced in the rainforest made collecting difficult. Just travelling to a remote interior site in the highlands of Indonesian Borneo required a four-day river journey and a crew to heft the 300 kilograms of equipment into a succession of smaller boats. At various points, the team had to wade up the river while the boatmen attacked the rapids in 13-metre longboats. A tropical downpour drenched the team nearly every day while they were collecting. Then



**Left:** A large aggregation of giant fruit bats, commonly called flying foxes.  
**Below: (Top)** A Rhinoceros beetle.  
**(Bottom)** A weevil clings to a dead dipterocarp seed.



each evening, they faced the unpleasant task of removing their socks and plucking swollen land leeches from their legs.

It is clear that the skills of the Indonesians were critical to the collecting process. Without the tree-climbing abilities of several Kenyah people at the interior site, Darling would not have been able to place Malaise traps in the canopy and Engstrom could not have raised bat nets into position. To place one Malaise trap, a Kenyah man shinnied 20 metres up a tree, then threw a lightweight rope over a branch. From there a climber from the World Wildlife Fund operation on Borneo used winches and other climbing gear to ascend 30 metres into the canopy. "I found that the Kenyah people are also avid collectors because they are integrated into the forest already," says Darling. "They enjoy seeing an entirely different aspect of the forest."

Where mammal traps could not reach, poison darts could. Blow-gun hunters shot several squirrels and tree shrews for Engstrom. "Without the hunters we would have had little information on arboreal animals," says Engstrom. Engstrom also came home with five species of spiny rats and a long-tailed giant rat that measured about 80 centimetres from its snout to the tip of its tail. The mammalogy team prepared specimens each evening and preserved the soft tissues in a canister of liquid nitrogen for subsequent genetic studies. At the end of the trip the specimens were divided between the zoological museum and the ROM.

The next step is for the Indonesian government to determine the order in which species are to be inventoried for the GEF project, and the training that their staff may need. Parasitic wasps, Darling's specialty, may be chosen because they are potential agents for natural pest control. For example, there are wasps that attack and kill caterpillars that damage crops, including rice, the staple of the Indonesian diet. Biting flies that are vectors for human disease may also be targeted early. On the botanical side, commercial concerns dictate that identifying and monitoring dipterocarp trees will likely be an early project.

However, some scientists are equally concerned that Indonesia may become more isolationist concerning its biological resources. A 1992 country study of biodiversity conducted by the Indonesian government with support from Norway has a





statement by an Indonesian politician suggesting the possibility of a moratorium on publishing relevant research "except where a contract has been signed which assigns royalty rights to Indonesia from any commercial exploitation of materials or information taken from Indonesia." The concern is that a potentially lucrative cancer cure, anti-viral agent, or other pharmaceutical or chemical product may be found in the rainforest for which Indonesia would receive no benefit.

This isolationist view has caused some scientists concern. "If you were not able to publish basic scientific information freely and openly, then inventory studies would grind to a screeching halt," says one, who asked not to be named. The Flora Malesiana inventory program is an example of how slow biological research is even under the best of conditions. Since 1950, it has been documenting plant diversity in Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea. So far it has treated less than 20 per cent of the estimated total number of flowering plants. At that rate it could take another 200 years to complete the project.

Yet international pressure to sustainably manage and conserve biodiversity is mounting and Indonesia is officially on-side. The 1992 Earth Summit in Brazil produced the Convention on Biological Diversity, which Indonesia and most other nations have signed. And Indonesia is sensitive to mistakes of the past. Large areas of rainforest were converted to agricultural uses in the 1960s and 1970s when transmigration programs encouraged farmers to move from the crowded island of Java to less populated islands such as Sumatra and Borneo. "Rainforest does vanish fast," says Kathy MacKinnon, who lived in Indonesia for many years. "One day you see an area newly opened and a road through secondary forest and within two years there won't be forest there at all."

Darling and Burley hope that the GEF project in which they have been involved will eventually lay the foundation for a national biodiversity information network that will offer a computerized mapping of biodiversity and land use throughout the islands. In the meantime, the blow-darts embedded in the map in Darling's office are a vivid reminder that ROM curators are not isolated in the ivory tower, but often tramping through the ebony forest and working to preserve it. ♡

**Left: A Rhinoceros hornbill is one of the colourful inhabitants of the rainforest. Below: (Top) The head of the village of Long Alango and his wife pose in ceremonial dress. Their headresses are made with hornbill feathers. (Bottom) Mark Engstrom and Burton Lim of the ROM's Department of Mammalogy prepare to head into the forest.**



# SAVING ASIA'S TEMPLES

*Asia's temples must continue to function  
within the cultural framework  
of the society that surrounds them*

JAN FONTEIN



ALL OVER ASIA THERE ARE MAGNIFICENT buildings that were constructed for the performance of religious ceremonies of three great world religions—Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam—as well as many other religions and

cults. Documenting the history of the buildings and attending to their preservation has been the responsibility of archaeologists and architectural historians and, to a certain extent, of the people living near them. For many reasons, issues concerning

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*Jan Fontein is the Bishop White Visiting Scholar in the Far Eastern Department, Royal Ontario Museum, and former director of the Boston Museum of Fine Art*

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**In southeast Asian countries that are mainly Buddhist, Buddhist monuments often have been in continuous use for worship for centuries and are constantly maintained**

the function and preservation of these and other religious monuments should be of interest to more than specialists. They should be of interest to us all.

When tracing the history of the preservation of Asian monuments, it becomes apparent that there are at least two problematic situations. The first concerns monuments that are still used for the religious function for which they were originally built. The other concerns monuments that are no longer used for their original purpose and are regarded instead as part of the national cultural heritage by the current population, which over time has converted to another religion.

In the Southeast Asian countries that are mainly Buddhist, such as Thailand and Myanmar (formerly Burma), Buddhist monuments often have been in continuous use for worship for many centuries. The Shwedagon Pagoda, Myanmar's greatest Buddhist shrine, is such a site. Every other year or so, after the torrential rainstorms of the monsoon season have abated, the inhabitants of Yangon (formerly Rangoon) raise funds to cover the shrine with a fresh layer of gold leaf. The archaeological history of this great monument, the descriptions of early travellers,

and the scarce documentation they left behind, demonstrate that not only the many structures that surround this sacred pagoda, but even the body of the pagoda itself, have been subjected to a perpetual process of renovation that has radically altered their appearance.

Those who contribute to the "improvement," restoration, and maintenance of a pagoda believe they are conducting good works for which they will be rewarded in future rebirths. Economists and sociologists have long maintained that in Myanmar the often very considerable investments in religious monuments, made only in order to obtain long-range spiritual rewards, may pose a serious obstacle to the economic development of the country. Furthermore, such religious devotion is rarely restrained by considerations of aesthetics or conserva-

tion and can actually threaten the survival of the historical monument.

The structures surrounding the Shwedagon are constantly being replaced by new buildings, in new styles, and they are constructed with modern materials. Corrugated iron is commonly used to replace wooden shingles and other traditional roofing. Combined with aluminum paint, corrugated iron has completely changed the look of this great centre of worship. There can be little doubt that the Shwedagon, as it rises majestically above the city of Yangon today, bears little resemblance to the monument that was raised by the legendary King Okkalapa, whose sculpted portrait graces one of its buildings.

Dressing an entire building in a new coat of brick or giving it a new stone facade—another process to which these pagodas and their subsidiary buildings have been subjected time and again—is a custom almost as old as the history of Buddhist monuments. Moreover, this way of expressing devotion is not only found among the followers of Buddhism and Hinduism. At the tomb of one of the *walis*, or early teachers of Islam, on the island of Madura in Indonesia, the superb wood carvings of the 15th and 16th centuries have been repainted in bright blues and yellows by a devout local sponsor.

Unlike surrounding islands where the populations have converted to Islam, on Bali people cling to their ancient Hindu-Buddhist faith. There are many fascinating examples of the conservation issues that arise in countries with a continuous religious culture. Bali is one of the few places where, after independence from colonial rule had been achieved, objects deposited in local museums were returned to the places where they had been found long ago, local temples, where they were treated once again as objects of worship. An example of such an object was a large statue of the demonic deity Bhairava, dating from the 14th century, excavated in fragments and painstakingly restored by a Dutch archaeologist.

The earthquake that devastated large parts of Bali in 1917 also destroyed the gate of the brick temple Pura Maospait in Den Pasar. In the 1960s, the remnants of its *candi bentar*, or "split gate," with parts of its brick reliefs, were all that was left in situ. During restoration, the crumbling gate



Preceding pages: Crowds gather for the Vaisak Festival at the Borobudur monument in central Java.

Above: Burmese are performing Buddhist rituals at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Myanmar. Facing page: The restored statue of Bhairava at Pura Kebo Edan in Bali, Indonesia.



was completely reconstructed. But the native craftsmen, who skilfully restored the brick structure and its sculpture, went one step further: they decided to add a few pillars with new brick reliefs in the same style. Given the climate to which these structures are exposed, it is not known how long it will take before both the carefully reconstructed old and freely created new parts blend into one. When this uniform appearance comes about, the few tourists who visit this off-the-beaten-track temple will regard both the old and the new as part of the same ancient monument.

On the other hand, there are religious monuments that owe their preservation to benign neglect. At Alchi, in Ladakh, a group of buildings that date in part from the early 13th century, has been preserved in a condition that is almost pristine, when compared with that of many other

Buddhist monuments. The almost miraculous survival of these buildings and their splendid murals may be attributed partly to the relatively low rainfall in this location, which is right behind the crest of the high mountain ranges. But of equal importance is the steep decline in prosperity experienced by the particular Buddhist sect that built these splendid monuments after the caravan route, its main source of income, had been rerouted to the other side of the swiftly flowing, barely fordable river. Elsewhere in Ladakh devout and rich patrons had the walls of their temples renovated and repainted time and time again. Only in Alchi, a remote pocket of poverty, have the ancient masterpieces of Buddhist mural art had a chance to survive.

In countries where the religious monuments of the past have lost their original function, renovation inspired by devotion rarely occurs, but problems of a different character arise. In many parts of Central and Southeast Asia the Buddhist and Brahmanic cults that had inspired the building of great monuments have been replaced by Islam, an anti-iconic faith that considers the representation of the divine and human figures to be heathen idolatry. While

it cannot be denied that the conversion to Islam in some places resulted in extensive damage to monuments of other faiths, the destruction of Buddhist and Hindu monuments was not nearly as widespread as it generally has been assumed.

Until recently Western scholarship too frequently accepted as an article of faith that Islamization inevitably resulted in artistic and cultural decline. These prejudicial views helped to create a climate that provoked some of the most flagrant acts of vandalism ever committed by Westerners in Asia. The local Asian populations, after being converted to Islam, often left the monuments of their ancestors alone, as these relics of the past continued to be protected by the lingering fear of ancestral retribution. Westerners did not have any such qualms. They justified pilfering of the monuments with the argument that the local people no longer had any need for them because of their adoption of another religion.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, a wave of destruction, mainly committed by Europeans and Japanese, inflicted much damage on ancient Asian monuments. For example, the German scholars von Le Coq and Grunwedel cut wall paintings out of the Buddhist caves along the Silk Road in Central Asia (presumably in order to save them from destruction at the hands of Islamic fanatics), took them to Berlin, and set them into the walls of their museum. During the Second World War, a large part of the murals were destroyed by Allied bombs. The original caves from which these wall paintings had been taken have all been well preserved. Recent Japanese photographs show the disfiguring scars left by the short-sighted and destructive activities of these eminent scholars.

This example of Western vandalism in Asia is only one of many that involve persons of various nationalities. However, rather than focusing on Western intervention, we may try instead to view the fate of the monuments that were caught in the change of religions from an Asian perspective.

Almost two years ago Hindu fundamentalists deliberately destroyed a mosque that had been built on the remains of an ancient Hindu temple in the city of Ayodhya, where, according to the ancient epic *Ramayana*, the God Vishnu incarnated himself as Prince Rama, the epic's legendary

Below: A carved stone medallion in the mosque of Mantingan, East Java.

Facing page: A detail from the Sum-Tsek temple at Alchi, in Ladakh.



**Religious monuments that lost their original function have been protected by local Asian populations, who fear ancestral retribution, but pilfered by Westerners, who lack such qualms**



**It is the realization of the irreplaceable, finite character of ancient monuments that should determine the best conservation methods and the most effective legal safeguards**

hero. Thousands of lives were lost in the resulting upheaval. The fundamentalists believe that the mosque actually occupied the spot where Rama was born, and this was sufficient reason for its destruction, even though the mosque was built 500 years ago.

All over the world houses of worship of one religion have been built on sites already endowed with an aura of sanctity by another religion. If the change in religion is final—if, that is, practitioners of the former religion no longer frequent that location—then the placement of the new house of worship evokes a sense of historic continuity rather than of a usurpation. Such would be the case, for example, of a cathedral built upon the site of an ancient Druid altar.

The mosque at Mantingan, on Java's north coast, is renowned for its winged gate and the beautifully carved stone medallions set into the walls of several of its buildings. Some of these medallions imitate the floral designs of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain of the 14th and 15th centuries, which were used to decorate the walls of Islamic structures in Southeast Asia. About 65 years ago the mosque at Mantingan was completely rebuilt by local sponsors without the involvement of the archaeological service, which was not even notified. When the renovation became

known, questions were raised as to whether, in this particular case, the archaeological service had been sufficiently vigilant in protecting the Islamic monuments. Then two Dutch historians who came to inspect the rebuilt mosque suggested that it was built on the site of an ancient Hindu temple. Not long ago this hypothesis was confirmed when new repairs had to be carried out, this time under proper archaeological supervision. When the much-admired medallions were removed from the walls, it was discovered that on their backs were scenes with

monkeys in relief, obviously illustrating episodes from the *Ramayana*. The fine-grained sandstone must have been recycled in 1559, when a local queen had the mosque and the tomb of her late husband built. This story offers an almost perfect parallel with that in Ayodhya, with one important difference. Because the Islamiza-

tion of Java was complete—there was no longer a practising Hindu community—the discovery on the back of these medallions was non-controversial and mainly of interest to archaeologists and art historians.

Yet other problems arise when revived religions reclaim their ancient monuments. In 1991, newspapers in several Buddhist countries carried the story of Nagarjun Shurai Sasai, a Japanese-born, naturalized-Indian Buddhist monk, who with 50 fellow Buddhists started a march across India to “liberate” the temple at Bodhgaya from Hindu control. The temple at Bodhgaya marks the spot where the Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment. It is the holiest of all Buddhist shrines; temples imitating its architecture can be found in Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, China, and Mongolia. Buddhism vanished from Northern India during the 13th century and the temple of Bodhgaya would probably have been completely reduced to ruins had it not been for the Burmese Buddhists who have restored it several times in the course of its long history. A Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka, who visited Bodhgaya in 1891, led the first effort to reclaim the temple for Buddhism. He started a protest movement that has now culminated in this demonstration, the outcome of which is still uncertain.

The recent history of the great Buddhist monument, Borobudur, in Java, provides an interesting example of government involvement in the search for a compromise for a situation somewhat similar to that of Bodhgaya. Like India, Java has not had any practising Buddhists, with the exception of Overseas Chinese, since the 15th or 16th century; it is only in recent years that Buddhism has begun to spread again. The movement to revive Buddhism has gained many new followers, especially after Buddhism was recognized by the Indonesian Government as a “legitimate” religion, that is, a religion with a scripture. (This is a definition of religion that seems to have originated in Islam.) The new Buddhist converts first sought to strengthen their status by establishing ties with traditional Buddhist organizations in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. Then they tried to reclaim Borobudur as their monument. Yet it is not even certain that Borobudur served as a place of worship or meditation after the early 10th century.



Facing page:  
A carved historical  
brick pillar at Pura  
Maospait in Den Pasar,  
Bali, prior to the  
restoration. Above:  
A recently added brick  
pillar at Pura Maospait  
in Den Pasar, Bali.

The Indonesian government, while generally supporting freedom of religion, did not feel that Borobudur, which it considers, above all, a national monument, should be ceded to new converts to Buddhism. And so, after lengthy consultations with Balinese Hindu-Buddhists, a remarkable compromise was reached. The full moon of the month of Vaisak, in the Hindu calendar, was chosen as the official national holiday of the Indonesian Buddhists. It is also a national holiday for all Indonesians, and on that day alone Indonesian Buddhists gather, together with monks from all over the Buddhist world, to celebrate a solemn ceremony. Starting in procession from the nearby Mendut temple, they proceed to a field in front of Borobudur. The festivities are quite colourful, and foreign tourists, in the firm belief that they are witnessing a centuries-old ritual, jostle to record the proceedings with their camcorders and cameras. Only the foreign monks are allowed to enter the monument on that day, but the ceremonies on the open field last well into the night, when the full moon rises above the main stupa of Borobudur.

Great religious monuments can serve many different purposes for many different people. It is most important that they continue to function within the cultural framework of the society that surrounds them. While the world is increasingly aware of the need to protect and preserve these ancient monuments, and while much progress has been made in that direction, history has also demonstrated that times of political strife can bring back in no time the bad old days when temples were despoiled by foreign travellers.

Cambodia, where ancient Khmer temples were robbed of their sculpture every day, is a living reminder of the fact that the old and persistent evil of cultural depredation raises its ugly head as soon as central authority weakens or is preoccupied with other priorities. Ancient monuments, those above as well as those below ground, can easily lose the protection once provided by fear of ancestral or divine retribution.

It is the realization of the irreplaceable, finite character of ancient monuments that should determine the best conservation methods and the most effective legal safeguards. This is the only way to ensure that what little survives from our tumultuous and destructive past will be preserved for future generations. ♣



# THE TRAGEDY OF INGE-VA

*Why did a wealthy family  
in 19th-century Upper  
Canada throw the entire  
contents of their kitchen  
down the privy?*

CAMILLE SOBRIAN FINLAY



WHY DID A WEALTHY FAMILY IN 19TH-CENTURY UPPER CANADA THROW the entire contents of their kitchen down the privy? Why did they rid themselves of all their expensive china, crystal, teacups, and saucers? Was it changing tastes? A fight between husband and wife? Or had the pieces been previously damaged by clumsy servants? This is just one of the mysteries from a site in Perth, Ontario, explored by Dena Doroszenko, senior archaeologist of the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

The 150-year-old privy is on the property of the stately Inge-va, an impressive Georgian Neoclassical house. Owned by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, the property's story features many of the triumphs and tragedies typical of life in 19th-century Canada.

Initial assessment of the site was carried out in 1987, and in 1988 work started on six archaeological "units" located in the backyard of Inge-va, beside the bake oven. As luck would have it, the sixth area was not reached until the last week of the dig. Here the results were outstanding. According to Doroszenko, the pit was about one metre (3.5 feet) deep and artifacts appeared at almost every level.

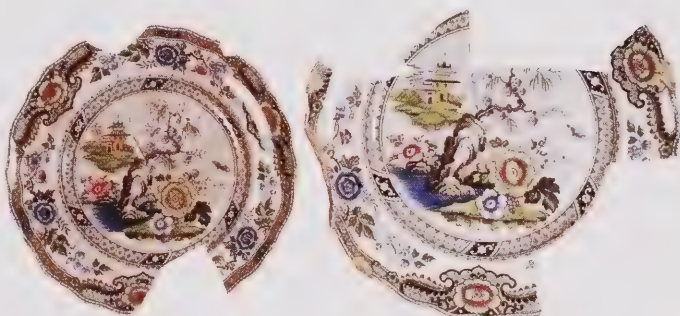
"The field crew worked 10 hours a day in a losing battle to complete the excavation by the end of the week and sort and bag the material as it was uncovered. By the end the garage was brimming with paper bags overflowing with artifacts."

The privy may have been dug in the fall as a winter outhouse. Excavation showed that it was absolutely rectangular at the lowest depth, with wet, organic fill found at the bottom, characteristic of a privy. As was common practice at the time, the pit was next used for the deposit of refuse. Doroszenko and her colleagues believe that the disposal of virtually all the contents of the kitchen and dining room, happened later, probably all at one time.

It was determined that the thousands of artifacts had belonged to the house's second owners, the Radenhursts, a famous Ontario family with a

colourful history. Exploring the layers of refuse and its relationship to that history was a puzzle that took Foundation archaeologists two years of research and assembly to unravel.

Some of the clues came from the history of Perth itself. With so many artifacts from the dig, the archaeologists were able to match their findings with historical documents, journals from townspeople, and oral histories, to come up with remarkable detail about the everyday life of this family.



Opposite page:  
(Top) Inge-va, located in Perth, Ontario, was the 19th-century home of the Radenhurst family.  
(Bottom) A selection of tablewares found in the house's privy.  
Above: Japanese-patterned plates.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY ONTARIO HERITAGE FOUNDATION

*Camille Sobrian Finlay is manager of Marketing and Communications for the Ontario Heritage Foundation*



Perth was originally a military depot. By the spring of 1816, about 1400 settlers had taken up land in the area. Former military officers, now on half-pay, had private incomes as well as their businesses and could afford to improve their homes and gardens. Parties, balls, and entertainment were commonplace activities for the village's upper crust.

By 1822 the village had grown to four churches, seven stores, five taverns, and between 50 and 100 private homes. It was made a municipality that year and in the next became the Judicial District of Bathurst. This made it an attractive community for up-and-coming lawyers. The first two in town were Daniel McMartin and James Boulton, responsible for building two of the more prestigious homes in Perth, McMartin House (also owned by the Ontario Heritage Foundation) and Summit House.

Thomas Mabon Radenhurst, the third lawyer in town, arrived in 1824. When he moved into Inge-va, which had been the Reverend Michael Harris's

## THE LAST FATAL DUEL

LAWYER THOMAS RADENHURST WAS ONE OF Perth's more notorious citizens. One of his noteworthy legal cases involved championing the cause of settlers on the land of Archibald McNab. After the settlers passed years of virtual serfdom, Radenhurst, acting on their behalf, proved that charges of neglect and tyranny against McNab were true. The government then bought the land in order to redress the land claims and grants for the settlers.

Radenhurst is also immortalized in Canadian folklore for his role in the Last Fatal Duel, which took place in 1833. The duel is commemorated on an Ontario Heritage Foundation plaque in front of Inge-va and in a song called "The Last Fatal Duel," written by Perth resident Fred Dixon and sung by Stompin' Tom Connors on his *Hockey Song* album.

In fact, the Last Fatal Duel was Radenhurst's second. The first had taken place in the early summer of 1830 when he and another town lawyer, James Boulton, became involved in a bitter quarrel. William Bell, also from Perth, described the scene in his journal:

*It was about this time that two of our young lawyers, Mr. Boulton, and Mr. Radenhurst, after quarrelling and abusing one another, in public, agreed to fight a duel.... But this, like all former affairs of the same kind, ended in*

*smoke. One of them indeed, it is assented, heard or thought he heard a bullet whiz past his ear.... But tho, at that time they professed to be reconciled, they have ever since evinced the bitterest hate.*

Although this duel ended harmlessly the second resulted in tragedy. In 1833, Robert Lyon, a law student and relative of Radenhurst died in a duel with one of Mr. Boulton's law students over the honour of Elizabeth Hughes, a private school teacher. The body of Lyon was carried through the streets of Perth to Inge-va, where Lyon had lived, where it was laid out in the downstairs bedroom.

Again, according to Bell's journal Radenhurst was said to blame his arch enemy, Boulton for encouraging the duel:

*I met Mr. Boulton, in the jailor's as I was coming away. While we were talking together, first one messenger and then another came, to request him to remain where he was, as Mr. Radenhurst, mad with liquor, had been running about the streets, and through all the rooms of Mr. Bolton's house with a pistol in his hand, seeking Mr. Boulton to shoot him. Such are the effects of intemperance and unbridled passions.*

Local folklore tells of the bloodied jacket of Lyon hanging in the hall at Inge-va for many years as a reminder of that fatal day.

Above: A glass, possibly for sherry, found at Inge-va.

first home in Perth, the house was about 10 years old. Radenhurst was a bachelor when he acquired Inge-va. In 1834 he married his first cousin, Lucy Edith Ridout, daughter of the Surveyor-General of York, Thomas Ridout. It was not always a happy marriage because Radenhurst was too often "mad with liquor." Local folklore tells of Edith waiting at the front door to beat her husband with a broom when he staggered home drunk.

Radenhurst's position as a lawyer and politician in the community would have required him to do a great deal of entertaining, which certainly took place, according to local tales of Thomas's drinking and as evidenced by the contents of the privy. The dig revealed an unusually large glass collection for

the period, 216 items in total. Among the artifacts discovered were 71 lead-glass tumblers and 17 wine glasses. Tumblers were used for drinking liquor or for taking medicine and were commonly found on the dining room table along with stemware. Several distinct sets of six tumblers and parts of other sets have been restored.

Very little stemware was found in the dig. However, workers turned up four trumpet-shaped bowls and fluted vessels, two bell-shaped vessels, eight bucket bowls and a cup-shaped bowl, a trumpet-shaped vessel, and a thin fluted vessel. Only one decanter fragment was recovered. This meant either that wine was infrequently decanted or that no decanters were thrown away. Along with the glass a total of 68 bottles were uncovered. Some would have contained wine, port, brandy, liqueur, or hock; others were for champagne or beer.

Some of the more noteworthy tea-sets included: Cintra, Bordered Hyacinth and Full Ribbed Ironstone, Persia, and Navy Island, with its Bartlett print pattern, produced by Podmore and Walker Company. Probably because of breakage, patterns such as Navy Island were replaced with less expensive Ironstone and hand-painted sets.

As for dinnerware, the family appears to have started with patterns such as Blue Shell, and purchased more expensive sets such as Dresden Sprig over the next 15 years. In total, 54 well-preserved, mid-19th-century patterns were found in the dig, including a large number of serving vessels, bowls, and platters. There were also three custard cups and a cruet vessel.

The dig also uncovered an unusual object that may be a glass salt dish; a few ceramic serving vessels, including pitchers, red earthenware milk pans, and stoneware crocks and bowls; and many condiment bottles for pickles, sauces, or salad oils. There were stoneware bottles that held blacking used for polishing stoves and shoes, and an inkwell and a gin bottle of stoneware.

Another sign of good living was the layer of oyster shells that capped and sealed the privy. Historical documentation recorded the shipment of a keg of oysters from Toronto to the family for Christmas in 1840. "The oyster shells near the top of the pit acted as a calcium or lime agent—a buffer to reduce odour and aid in decomposition," explained Doroszenko.

Thirty-two toiletry bottles indicated an obvious concern for hair loss. There were patent medicine products for hair replacement and styling, such as Bogle's Hyperion Fluid, Balm of Columbia, S.S. Blodgett's Persian Balm, and Rowland's Macassar Oil. There were also four scented-water bottles, including one that had contained the very popular Jean Marie Farina cologne, first introduced in 1843. Other toiletry items included chamber pots, basins, and ewers.

Judging by her findings Doroszenko concluded that the Radenhursts were affluent people. "Their household goods would have been considered quite diverse and expensive." Records confirm this. The Bank of Montreal gave Edith a credit rating of "eight" in the 1870s, almost 20 years after her husband's death. The rating, so its definition said, "should only be taken with very good names."

However, 76 pharmaceutical bottles recovered from the excavation are a sad indicator of the tragic side of the Radenhurst family. During their 20 years of marriage, Edith and Thomas had 10 children. Thomas passed away in 1854 and his wife and children continued to live in the house. Sadly, six of the 10 children died over the next two decades. Of the six, one son and two daughters died of tuberculosis and another daughter of typhoid fever.



Blue-Willow patterned plates belonged to one of 54 sets owned by the Radenhursts.

Edith Radenhurst (1811-1878), the wife of Thomas, endured the tragic deaths of her children.





A selection of stoneware containers was found in the privy.

Even though it had been 21 years since anyone suffering from tuberculosis had lived in Inge-va, Ella Inderwick took extraordinary measures before she and her three sons settled there.



TB, or consumption, was the “white death” of the 19th century and very much a part of everyday life in much the same way that AIDS is today. In 1897 tuberculosis was ranked the number one killer in Canada, taking 3160 lives. Charles Dickens captured the impact of the disease on society when he referred to TB in *Nicholas Nickleby* as “a disease which medicine never cured, wealth never warded off, or poverty could boast exemption from.”

Accounts of medical treatment of tuberculosis during the 19th century state that opiates were used to quiet cough and combat diarrhoea, and to ease mental anguish. Cod liver oil was a popular restorative and favourite remedy for treating consumption in the 1840s.

Throughout the mid to late 19th century, a great many patent medicines were advertised with promises of “sure” cures, and the terror the disease created led even well-educated people to buy them. Some of the findings in the privy included bottles of Dr. Townsend Sarsaparilla, Burdock’s Blood Bitters, and Ayer’s Pectoral Syrup. The only restorative ingredients in most patent medicines were opiates and alcohol—temporary relief at best.

The unusual contents of the privy may be connected with the tragedy and disease that befell the household of Inge-va during the 1860s and 1870s. In *The Complete Home*, 1883, Julia McNair Wright stressed the need for the sick room to be clean and simply furnished and recommended that the wallpaper and carpets be removed and walls white-washed. As early as 1699, edicts had been proclaimed in Europe that, “household goods not susceptible of contamination shall immediately be cleansed and those susceptible shall at once be burned and destroyed.”

Based on her research, Doroszenko stated: “It appears likely that Edith was terrified another family member would become ill with TB or typhoid fever. As a desperate measure she may have buried all the

family’s household goods at some point in the 1870s. To further substantiate this theory, Doroszenko described one find that made the degree of Edith’s fear all the more apparent: “Edith’s son Charles was 27, a promising young lawyer, when he died of TB. We found his baby mug with his name inscribed on it. It’s the kind of thing she would have wanted to save.”

The Radenhursts lived in that house more than 100 years ago and there is very little left in it from their time. Yet archaeologists have been able to construct details of their everyday lives because virtually everything from some rooms of that household was thrown away into the privy pit.

Ella Inderwick and her three sons moved into Inge-va in 1894. Although it



had been 21 years since anyone with TB had been in the house, it was still generally believed that the house itself was infected. A local story tells of a Dr. Beeman visiting the house after the Inderwicks moved in. Seeing Ella Inderwick's son Cyril playing on the floor, he demanded to know how she had cleaned the floor boards. Hearing that she had only washed them with soap and water, he insisted she paint the floor immediately to eliminate germs of tuberculosis in the cracks.

Doroszenko did not work alone to reconstruct the lives of the Radenhurst family. She was assisted by Bruce Stewart and Frank Dieterman of the Cataraqui Archaeological Research Foundation and volunteers from the Ottawa chapter of the Ontario Archaeology Society. Piecing together the story required the latest and best database software and computers which, according to Doroszenko, "are as much the tools of today's archaeologists as trowels and sieves." Such technology was critical at Inge-va to sort the amazing number of fragments recovered from the privy dig. Doroszenko analyzed 15,075 artifacts, "an enormously complex puzzle," with the patience and help of Alicia Hawkins of the



Left: Ceramic objects as they were found in the privy. Above: The glass bottles would have contained scented water.

University of Toronto and Richard Gerrard from the Toronto Historical Board.

Ella Inderwick named Inge-va, which means "come here" in the Tamil language. It was her son Cyril's wish that the house be turned over to a government agency for preservation, and in 1974 his widow donated Inge-va to the Ontario Heritage Foundation. ♡

*Inge-va is part of the Perth Chamber of Commerce's year-round, self-guided walking tour program. Visitors are invited to view the grounds and examine the handsome exterior of this Regency cottage. For more information about walking tours in Perth, call (613) 267-3200.*

PHOTOGRAPHY (RIGHT) COURTESY CANADIAN PARKS SERVICE; (LEFT) ONTARIO HERITAGE FOUNDATION



*An Egyptian cast-bronze cat in the ROM's collections  
was restored to its former beauty through careful conservation work.*

## Conservation Gives Cat Another Life

WHEN A CAST-BRONZE CAT FROM the ROM's Egyptian collections was first brought to the Museum's conservation studio, it was quickly and irreverently dubbed the "muskrat." Because it was so covered in corrosion and dirt, which obscured any fine detail. Furthermore, there was an unsightly repair to the left torso, which included some floating pieces that supposedly had belonged to the object, and adhesive repairs to a break running around the whole cat that crossed the back and the two front legs. Adhesive had been applied to other areas of the torso as well.

Having done some of the conservation work on objects in the Ancient Egypt and Nubia galleries, I was especially interested in the challenge of properly restoring the cat. As a beginning, several areas of the cat were spot-cleaned mechanically to deter-

mine whether there was a patina on the surface that could be revealed through cleaning. One of the floating pieces of the original repair had a magnificent surface, but such a surface did not show up anywhere else. Without a patina, the cat's appearance would not have been enhanced by mechanical cleaning; it therefore was cleaned by means of an air abrasive unit to gently blow loose corrosion away. This revealed a very attractive green corrosion on the surface, probably a copper carbonate or malachite. Bumps of corrosion were flattened mechanically to follow the natural curves of the object.

None of my solvents could dissolve the filling material in the old repair and so it had to be removed mechanically. When the filling was removed from the floating pieces, it was obvious that they were flat and had never belonged to the curva-

ceous torso of the cat. And because the floating pieces were of foreign materials, it became clear why they could have a magnificent patina while the rest of the cat did not.

Next, the join around the torso was re-adhered with epoxy resin for strength. Adhesive on the surface, which was only covering hair-line cracks, was brittle and easily removed mechanically. The large area of old repair was filled with a white epoxy putty that was carved and textured, then painted with dry earth pigments to match the rest of the object. With a bit more retouching in other places, the homely "muskrat" was restored to its former feline beauty.

SUSAN STOCK

*Susan Stock is archaeological  
metals conservator at the  
Royal Ontario Museum*

## Arctic Mysteries, Architectural Histories, and more...

JOHN GIEGER AND OWEN BEATTIE'S book *Frozen in Time: Unlocking the Secrets of the Franklin Expedition* was one of the pleasant surprises of the 1988 publishing year, with favourable reviews in nearly every publication you care to name, including *Rotunda*. The book added much to public understanding of the ill-fated Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin, who perished with his whole expedition in 1848 while looking for the Northwest Passage to Asia. Readers were fascinated by the exhumation of the bodies of three 19th-century sailors (the climate of Beechy Island in the High Arctic had preserved them remarkably well for nearly 150 years) and intrigued by what forensic science could reveal about how the men had lived and died.

Gieger and Beattie's new book, **Dead Silence: The Greatest Mystery in Arctic Discovery** (Penguin, \$29.99) has some of the same intrinsic interest but doesn't quite live up to the boast of its subtitle. But it's a worthwhile initiative all the same—a second archaeological detective story that benefits by bringing to bear on a tragedy of the North an intense combination of field work, lab work, and archival research. In these ways, as in the ease of its style and of course in the geography it covers, *Dead Silence* is reminiscent of work done by the ROM's late Walter Kenyon, particularly *The Battle for James Bay 1686*, his 1971 book with J. R. Turnbull.

The tragedian this time is James Knight (1640?-1720?), a Hudson's Bay Company explorer and trader who was already quite elderly when, on the last of his numerous voyages to Hudson and James bays, he set off

to see whether he could find the gold and copper deposits of which the aboriginals had spoken. If that calls to mind Sir Martin Frobisher more than a century earlier, you're quite right. Knight's two ships sank within sight of the mainland of Hudson Bay, and he and his 40 men perished, over the course of several seasons, as supplies and hope—and maybe their good relations with the Inuit—trickled away. They perished near Marble Island, off Rankin Inlet.

In all Arctic exploration, Gieger and Beattie write, only the final Franklin voyage rivals Knight's "in terms of the totality of the defeat and the extent of the mystery." Yet little pieces of the puzzle were available from quite early on. The redoubtable Samuel Hearne found the remains of some of Knight's party in 1767 (though, rather suspiciously, he waited 20 years before giving all the details in his famous book, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean*). Subsequently, many American whalers in the 19th century stopped at the remote island, discovering artifacts while leaving behind junk of their own, without putting the whole story together. All of which just shows again the superiority in many cases of the oral tradition over the written, for the local native population all knew the story well and kept handing it down in remarkable detail from one generation to the other.

Beattie, an anthropologist at the University of Alberta, began his field investigations in 1989. There was much to see at the island: the remains of Knight's wintering station, a large structure still in good enough repair to allow for imagina-

tive reconstruction, and indeed parts of the two ships, which divers had discovered in the 1970s. Gieger writes of a glut of evidence "available to the eye: whalers' graves, Inuit graves, even Thule graves" but none for "presumably the single largest grouping of all, the graves of Knight's men." Excavation of the ruined shelter and the area surrounding it, however, turned up many artifacts consistent with Knight's time: coins, a set of navigator's dividers, and 18th-century footwear both plain and fancy.

As with Knight, so it was with Franklin: questions about his fate would go on for years. A small U.S. mission was actually the first to find some of the grisly evidence of the Franklin party; the search was recorded by one of the team's members, a Czech named Heinrich Klutschak, whose book **Overland to Starvation Cove: With the Inuit in Search of Franklin, 1878-1880**, translated by William Barr, has just reappeared as a University of Toronto Press paperback (\$24.95).

One shouldn't leave the subject of polar exploration without also pointing out the existence of **Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions** (University of Minnesota Press, US \$14.95 paper) in which Lisa Bloom debunks Robert Scott and Admiral Robert Peary as mere male fantasists, trying to fulfil (as they most certainly were) some culturally sanctioned dream of conquest.

Another example of an archaeological whodunit is **Archaeology, History and Custer's Last Battle** by the Alberta-trained archaeologist Richard Allan Fox Jr. (University of Oklahoma Press, US\$29.95 cloth).

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### BOOK REVIEWS CONTINUED

He approaches the story of George Armstrong Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn in 1876 in a new way and develops a fresh thesis. By paying closer attention to aboriginal accounts of the engagement than non-natives have done previously, and squaring these with what modern archaeological techniques tell him, he emerges with a picture of Custer's five companies experiencing a "disintegration of command" and perishing in terror and chaos as they fled. No small band of troopers put up a brave and vain defence atop what's now called Custer's Hill, he concludes. This book might profitably be read in tandem with two new paperback reissues of related works. One is **Custer's Last Campaign: Mitch Boyer and the Little Bighorn Restructured** by John S. Gray (University of Oklahoma Press, US\$14.95), which shows how scientific and archival labour went together to identify the remains of one of Custer's scouts. The second is **The Custer Reader** edited by Paul Andrew Hutton (University of Oklahoma Press, US\$19.95), which concentrates on the evolution of the Custer myth and the mystique.

SOME OTHER NEW BOOKS OF INTEREST to *Rotunda* readers:

- **A History of Russian Architecture** by William Craft Brumfield (Cambridge University Press) is a pricey (US\$95) but genuinely valuable addition to the flood of books appearing in the West to satisfy our new (or at least, different) fascination with Russia. The book is neatly arranged by era, and this is no small triumph of organization considering that Russia, now as throughout so much of its history, is partly within Europe and partly outside. As a result architecture was subjected to competing, almost contradictory influences that produced much that was classicism at its best (St. Petersburg) and much that was distinctly its own (St. Basil's Cathedral, to take only the most photographed example). The effect of the book is almost encyclopedic, an expensive bargain.

• The same phrase must be used to describe the third and concluding volume of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, entitled **The Land Transformed 1800-1891** (University of Toronto Press, \$95). (Its sister volumes were subtitled "Beginnings to 1800," published 1987, and "Addressing the 20th Century," which appeared three years later.) The editor R. Louis Gentilcore, the cartographer/designer Geoffrey J. Matthews, and the production manager Byron Moldofsky have obviously worked as a team to push even further the notion of what most people think of as an atlas. Relying very heavily on the most advanced computer imaging techniques, they have integrated highly sophisticated maps (always visually alluring in themselves) with text, graphs, paintings, and tables etc. They work within the strictly contemporary notion of what "geography" means—a kind of interdisciplinary enquiry, as much the partner of politics and economics as of history. While other great academic publishing houses (not always excluding Oxford University Press in Britain) have sometimes succumbed to the urge to cheapen their approach to reference books, UTP has maintained its integrity, and even enhanced it by the vigorous pursuit of the latest technology.

• When Capt. James Cook explored Nootka Sound in 1779 he found "trunks of very large trees...set up singly, or by pairs...with the front end carved into a human face; the arms and hands cut out upon the sides, and variously painted; so that the whole was a truly monstrous figure." Such totem poles, as we've learned to call them, attracted less and less attention in the 19th century, once the fur trade peaked. After the Dominion government began trying to manage the aboriginal cultures, the custom and craft fell into disuse, to the point where, writing in the 1920s, the pioneer Canadian folklorist Marius Barbeau could say, "This art now belongs to the past." Hilary Stewart is a prolific writer of books

on the native cultures of the Pacific Northwest, and in her latest, **Looking at Totem Poles** (Douglas & McIntyre, \$14.95 paper), she tells how a spirited revival of totem-carving began in the 1950s, after many poles had been looted, vulgarized, or carted off to museums. Her treatment seems thorough, enthusiastic, sympathetic, and complete. She provides directions to, and her own sketches of, 150 accessible and representative poles on the British Columbia mainland, on Vancouver Island, and along the Alaska coast.

• In recent years, a string of British authors, such as Stephen Knight, Martin Short, Michael Baigent, and Richard Leigh, have written exposés about the Freemasons, that sect of generally middle-aged white males who claim descent from the Knights Templar of Crusader days but seem concerned mostly with charitable and community work, plus a lot of passwords, secret handshakes, and generally harmless mumbo-jumbo. These books came on the heels of a series of scandals connecting Masonic membership with corruption at Scotland Yard. But **The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry** (Penguin, \$80) by James Stevens Curl derives from a different impulse. Curl is not a conspiracy buff but a British architectural historian who shows, rather convincingly, the extent to which the Masons (actually, an organization founded in the 17th century) propagated their symbols and motifs in the design of public and private buildings, in town planning, even in formal gardens. He makes an excellent case in a book distinguished for the depth of its picture research. This is one of the most unusual high-quality books on architecture I've seen in recent years.

• Just at a time when North American architecture seems to be groping to find a new aesthetic that will reflect economic and environmental changes, the career of Frank Lloyd Wright has been undergoing a spirited re-examination. Witness the big exhibition last year at the Museum of Modern Art in New

# ROTUNDA

the magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum

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## BOOK REVIEWS CONTINUED

York and an absolute skyscraper of recent books for and against him. For the autodidactically inclined, maybe the handiest of these is **Wright Sites** (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, \$12 paper). Wright designed approximately 400 domestic dwellings in the United States, of which about 12.5 per cent have been lost or are about to be. Arlene Sanders has selected 50 of the others for this state-by-state guidebook (the closest for most *Rotunda* readers being in Buffalo, which, like New York City and Chicago, is rich in Wright's legacy).

- One Frank Lloyd Wright dwelling—the Pope-Leighey house in Virginia, built 1939-41—is included in Iain Gale and Richard Bryant's highly browsable book, **Living Museums** (Little, Brown, \$50). The idea here is to give the architectural and decorative histories of a variety of private homes in North America, Europe, the Far East, and the Antipodes, which survive as museums. For example, there is the poet Goethe's mid-18th century house at Weimar, or Sir John Soane's Museum in London (a place famous for not being better known). One of the most fetching is Charleston, the Sussex farmhouse of the painters Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, who decorated every flat surface and created a kind of total-art environment. Charleston served as the country gathering place of the entire Bloomsbury circle, including of course Vanessa's sister, Virginia Woolf, and it has never looked more inviting than it does in this book. *Living Museums* also includes a long (but, judging from the section on Canada, somewhat eccentric) appendix of museum-houses round the world.

- It may seem a little self-serving to welcome a new paperback edition of Lovat Dickson's book **The Museum Makers: The Story of the Royal Ontario Museum** (ROM/University of Toronto Press, \$14.95), which first appeared in 1986. I hope not, for this is not the usual institutional flackery. Dickson, a charming man

and writer, was a Canadian author who rose to the directorship of Macmillan, the British publishing house. In that capacity, he championed people as different as H.G. Wells, Radclyffe Hall, and Grey Owl (all of whom he wrote biographies of, after retiring in 1967 and returning to Canada, where he spent his final 20 years).

*The Museum Makers* tells a familiar story but tells it with style and grace: how various early attempts at an all-purpose museum for Upper Canada and later Ontario finally bore fruit just before the First World War, thanks largely to Sir Edmund Walker of the old Canadian Bank of Commerce. Charles Trick Currelly, a Canadian who worked with the famous archaeologist Flinders Petrie in Egypt (and who eventually wrote *I Brought the Ages Home*), is naturally another early figure of importance. So is Bishop W.C. White, who, shall we say, assembled much of the Chinese collection. Dickson was given a free hand to discuss the various troubles and controversies, such as the sometimes uncertain relationship between the ROM and the University of Toronto and the occasionally volatile one between the board and certain curators.

- **America's Ancient Treasures**, edited by Franklin and Mary Elting Folsom (University of New Mexico Press (US\$37.50 cloth, US\$19.95 paper), is a revised and expanded edition of a classic work of reference dealing with historical and archaeological sites, with particular attention to aboriginal ones ancient and modern. The text is directed at the serious amateur rather than the happy tourist. It's one of the few such American books that also includes thorough and detailed information on Canadian sites. Perhaps the title should have also been revised to reflect the book's broad scope.

DOUGLAS FETHERLING

*Douglas Fetherling  
is book review editor  
of Rotunda*

## ❖ ROM ANSWERS ❖

**Dear ROM Answers,**  
Could you give me some information about this sideboard? It was bought in Nyack, New York, sometime in 1965 along with several other items as secondhand furniture. We know nothing of its history prior to that time. It measures 1.47 metres long, 56 centimetres deep, and stands 91 centimetres high. Inside one of the drawers there is a small "coin" that bears the inscription "Royal Furniture-Made by Robert W. Irwin."

I would appreciate any information that you could give me but my main interest is in restoration. The varnish is badly pitted in places and the top is stained with quite large white glass and bottle marks that could have been made by a leaking soda syphon. Would it be possible to remove the varnish without damaging the paint underneath?

Also, some of the "inlay" has broken away in pieces all along the top edge. We thought this might be dealt with by removing small pieces from the back and inserting them along the front.

Despite the passage of time and much abuse the drawers still slide smoothly and the doors hang true. It is in daily use in our home and is a much-loved and coveted (by our



children) possession. We are interested in its value only for insurance purposes. If it does have value would a restoration such as we envisage seriously detract from its appeal?

C. S.  
KOOTENAY BAY,  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

### Dear Reader,

The photographs and the brass medallion with the maker's name "Royal Furniture..." suggest that your sideboard is an example of reproduction furniture made in the present century. Given the quality of the work and the taste for dining furniture in the English Seraton, Adam, and Hepplewhite styles, I would date your sideboard sometime between the wars, i.e., about

1920 to 1940. The manufacturer was likely in the United States, perhaps in New York state or in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which became an important centre of furniture production in the late 1800s. You might try writing to the public library in Grand Rapids where an archives on the local factories is maintained. It may have information on Robert W. Irwin or even a catalogue of his "Royal Furniture" line. Other signs that this is a modern reproduction

would include the hardware, the smooth machine-planed surface on the drawer interiors, bottom and back, and the amount of wear on the drawers and other areas.

The veneered decoration is unusual and indicates that this was likely part of a superior line. Even though it is probably thinner than English veneers of the 1770-to-1800 period, the marquetry is an ambitious simulation of the work on the best English pieces from the period. I expect that the reserve at the end with the *putti* (small naked boys) and the surrounding frame and ornaments are painted. This again is inspired by fine English antique furniture of the same period and style.

Though it is difficult to assess its value today, the sideboard is probably worthy of professional restora-

*If you possess furniture, silver, glass, metalwork, ceramics, textiles, or small decorative objects that may have an interesting past and have aroused your curiosity, this column is for you. Send a clear black-and-white photograph (or 35-mm colour slide) of the object against a simple background, providing dimensions, a description, any markings, or any known details of its history to: ROM Answers, c/o Rotunda Magazine, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6. Be*

*sure to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope large enough to include any photos that we must return to you with the reply.*

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tion as it will be increasingly appreciated over the years. Ray Tokarek, the Museum's wood conservator, suggests that the white stain indicates that the finish is alcohol based, either varnish or possibly shellac. Rather than removing the existing finish, it would be preferable to reamalgamate what remains. This can be a tricky procedure and can only be done successfully by someone with an extensive knowledge of finishes. A varnish finish is much more difficult to treat than shellac.

However, if you decide to attempt this treatment, you should first clean the surface with mineral spirits and a cotton cloth to remove any wax build-up. Test the finish in an inconspicuous area with a cotton swab dampened with alcohol (methyl hydrate, obtainable at most hardware stores). As you roll the swab over the surface, you should start to pick up the finish, which will turn the cotton brown, and the surface will become slightly sticky. If the testing is not giving you these results, it is better to stop and let a professional examine the finish.

Should you get the correct results and decide to continue, you may attempt to remove the bloomed area using an "eraser" created from a piece of wadding such as upholstery stuffing to which a small amount of alcohol is added. The wadding is then wrapped in a lint-free cloth. The rubber is passed over the bloomed area two or three times with enough pressure to discharge small amounts of alcohol through the cloth. Let the surface dry and repeat once, if necessary. If you are not achieving the desired results, stop and consult a professional. When the surface has dried, you may want to go over it with a dry cloth using fine pumice and a little mineral oil. This will smooth and matt the surface to blend in with the existing finish. This could be followed with a furniture paste wax.

Tokarek considers it unethical to replace the veneer on an old piece of furniture with veneer taken from a less visible area of the piece. Instead, he prefers, if possible, to

leave existing parts as they are and to replace the missing sections with new wood stained and finished to match. However, he concedes that it is not uncommon for restorers to do repairs as you've suggested, and that it may be easier to match the missing veneer on the front from what survives on another part, and then replace that section with comparable new material. The decision is yours and will be influenced by the quality of the piece along with the skill of the restorer. It is not surprising that a high-quality reproduction like this would turn up in New York state, where there were many wealthy consumers with taste and money. We wish you every success in restoring your sideboard and in enjoying it for many years to come.

PETER KAEELGREN,  
EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT,  
ROM

#### Dear ROM Answers,

We purchased this chalice at an estate auction. It is made of cobalt-blue glass with gold decoration painted in relief. The dimensions are 18 centimetres in height, 10 centimetres deep at the foot, and 15.5 cm wide at



the bowl. The gold decoration includes pictures of Saints John, Luke, Matthew, and Mark, inscribed "S. IOHANE, S. LUCAS, S. MATEUS, S. MARCUS" with "EVANGLYS" to the side. I would be pleased if you could shed some light upon this beautiful goblet.

J. F.,  
WINDSOR, ONTARIO

#### Dear Reader,

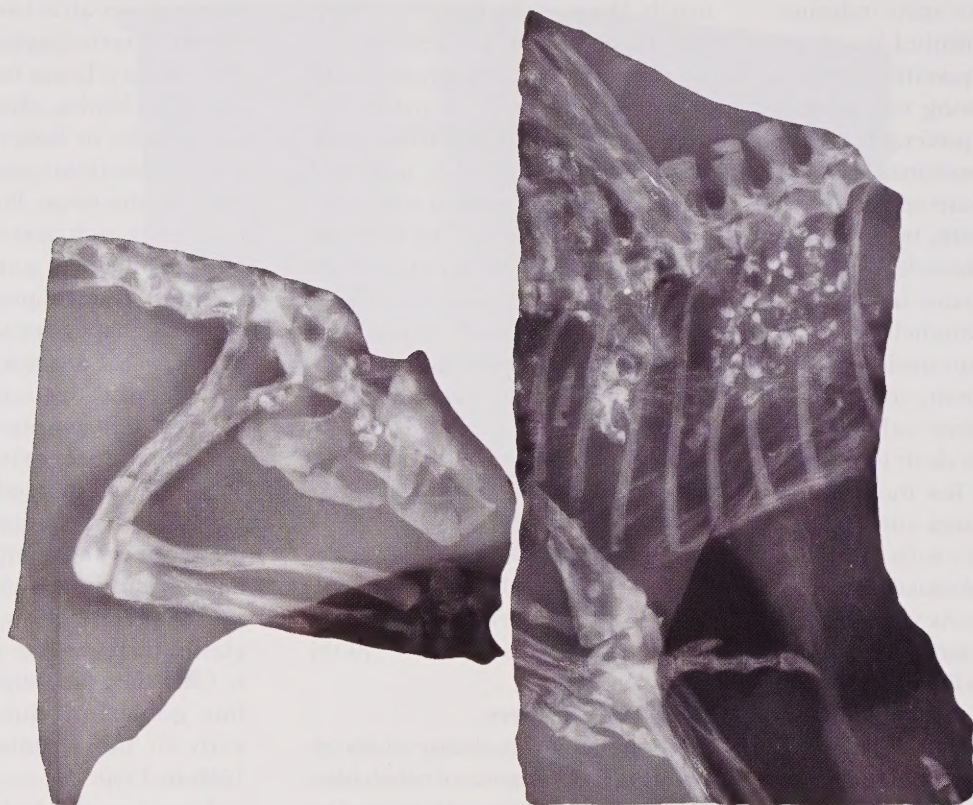
Judging from photographs and other examples that I have seen, you own an attractive example of historical-revival-style glass made in this century. It was most likely produced in Venice, though factories in Germany or Bohemia (formerly Czechoslovakia) are capable of such productions. The colours are invariably rich, even vivid: ruby, cobalt blue, or emerald green. Whether in single pieces or liqueur sets, the shapes are usually simple and direct. I am not at all certain whether the decoration is hand-painted, transfer-printed, or painted over transfer-printed outlines. The gold is intended to look rich and to create the impression that the piece is an example of late Roman/Byzantine engraved gold leaf sandwiched between sheets of glass, which was often used for early Christian portraits and for the fine goblets produced in Venice early in the Renaissance, about 1500 to 1530.

I used to think that such glass dated to the late 1800s or early 20th century because it follows the historical revival tendencies of the 19th century. I now know that it was produced in Venice until recently, and may still be in production. In the Judaica Gallery of the Samuel European Galleries at the Royal Ontario Museum, there is a tall cylindrical goblet with similar decoration, including a portrait of the prophet Elijah (acc. no. L989.11.3). It is on loan from the Reuben and Helene Denis Museum at Beth Tzedec Synagogue, Toronto, where it is on record as having been purchased new, in Venice, in 1980. Your footed bowl features portraits of the Four Evangelists who wrote the four main books of the New Testament. That is what the title EVANGLYS refers to.

Although your footed bowl was made within the last 65 years, at the most optimistic dating, it is an attractive and interesting piece and well worth preserving. Thank you for writing.

P. K.

## ❖ LOOK AGAIN ❖



### Must Be Something I Ate

**T**HE PROTOSAURUS, AN EARLY REPTILE THAT PREDATED dinosaurs, lived about 255 million years ago in the Permian period. The first specimen was found in 1706, and the first fossil reptile skeleton ever to be described belonged to a Protosaurus. Swedenborg wrote the description in 1734.

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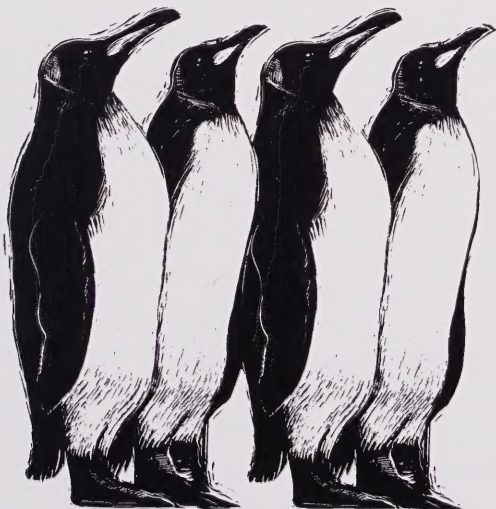
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*Fred Lehner*



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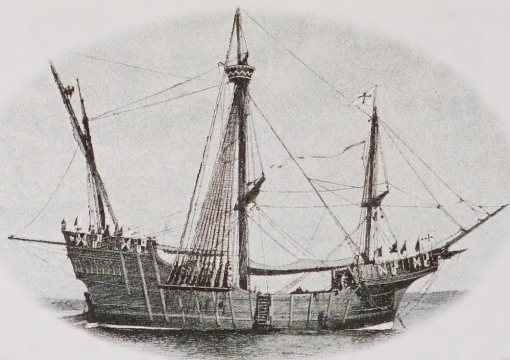
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